



## REPORT OF INVESTIGATION

File Number: 05-034

Agency: Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT)

Basis for Investigation: Anonymous complaint

Allegations: Misuse of GDOT Employees, Equipment, and Resources

Date Opened: October 28, 2004

Investigated By: Deputy Inspector General Phil Walker  
Deputy Inspector General Bob Terjesen

Date of Report: March 17, 2006

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James E. Sehorn, Inspector General

# OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL



File Number: 05-034

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In October 2004, the Office of the State Inspector General (OIG) received an anonymous telephone complaint and initiated this investigation.

The anonymous caller had two allegations of fraud. First, he alleged that several years ago, in April 2001, employees of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) in Tattnall County, Georgia, used state funds for personal use. The employees, instead of depositing in a state account the proceeds of the sale of salvaged aluminum siding from a GDOT building, spent the money on personal meals. Second, he alleged that in August 2003 GDOT employees, equipment and materials were improperly used for private driveways on State Route 292 in Toombs County, Georgia.

During the investigation a third instance of misuse of state resources was brought to the attention of the OIG. This third allegation is that in late October 2004, Mr. Gary Priester, GDOT District #5 Engineer, Jesup, Georgia, improperly directed GDOT employees to clean and prepare a GDOT facility for a cookout in support of local candidates for county offices; and, certain GDOT employees were directed to prepare the food for the cookout as part of their assigned duties.

On several occasions during the investigation, OIG provided the GDOT Commissioner or one of his Deputy Commissioners information so that immediate action could be taken.

In November 2004, OIG learned that GDOT investigators had conducted an investigation of the allegations that the anonymous caller presented to OIG. The investigators reported their findings to GDOT management.

Concerning the allegation of the misuse of proceeds from the sale of salvaged siding, OIG found that the GDOT had not taken action in this matter. The GDOT did not take action because there was the misunderstanding that an agency

could not take action while an OIG investigation is ongoing. OIG found sufficient evidence in the GDOT investigation to make the determination that the proceeds of the sale of the salvaged aluminum siding were state funds and the state funds were not deposited in a state account.

OIG recommends that the GDOT determine whether the evidence in its internal investigation is sufficient to identify the individual(s) responsible for the failure to deposit the sale proceeds into a state account and take any disciplinary or administrative action deemed appropriate.

Concerning the second allegation, OIG reviewed the GDOT Report of Investigation. The GDOT report found that the repair and replacement of the driveways on SR 292 were authorized by state law and required for safety reasons. The review by OIG determined that the decision of the GDOT to make the repairs and replacement of these driveways based on safety concerns was reasonable and within its statutory authority. OIG investigation determined that the private property owner of the driveways violated the terms of the GDOT private driveway permits issued to him.

OIG recommends the GDOT coordinate with the Attorney General's office to seek reimbursement from the private property owner for the costs of the driveway repairs and replacement performed at state expense along SR 292. GDOT records reflect the cost incurred to the Georgia taxpayers to be approximately eight thousand eighty-eight dollars (\$8,088.00).

In regard to the allegation that Mr. Gary Priester used state employees and resources for a cookout to support local candidates, OIG found that Mr. Priester's decision to hold a cookout to show appreciation to local dignitaries, on state property, using state employees, without the approval of the Commissioner of Transportation, was inappropriate.

OIG determined that a number of managers subordinate to Mr. Priester did not communicate their concerns of the inappropriateness of the cookout to senior GDOT officials in Atlanta.

OIG recommends that the GDOT Commissioner provide a written directive to District Engineers to set forth department policy for employee appreciation and public relations events.

OIG requests the GDOT, within 30 days of the issuance of this report, provide a written response whether and how these recommendations will be implemented.



**Report of Investigation**

**File No. 05-034**

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## **I. Basis for Investigation**

In October 2004, the Office of the State Inspector General (OIG) received an anonymous telephone complaint and initiated this investigation.

The anonymous caller had two allegations of fraud. First, he alleged that several years ago, in April 2001, employees of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) in Tattnall County, Georgia, used state funds for personal use. The employees, instead of depositing the proceeds of the sale of salvaged aluminum siding from a GDOT building in a state account spent the money on personal meals. Second, he alleged that in August 2003 GDOT employees, equipment and materials were improperly used. He alleged that in August 2003 private driveways on State Route (SR) 292 in Toombs County, Georgia, were repaired or replaced at state expense.

During the investigation, information surfaced that in late October 2004 Mr. Gary Priestler, GDOT District #5 Engineer in Jesup, Georgia, without proper authority, directed GDOT employees to clean and prepare the Long County, Georgia, GDOT facility for a cookout in support of local candidates for county offices; and, improperly directed certain GDOT employees to prepare the food for the cookout as part of their assigned duties.

On several occasions during the investigation, OIG provided the Commissioner of the GDOT or one of his Deputy Commissioners, information so that immediate action could be taken. These occasions will be addressed in the Narrative below.

## **II. Narrative - Allegation 1**

**Allegation: In April 2001, GDOT employees in the Tattnall County, Georgia, office removed the aluminum siding from a GDOT building, sold the aluminum to a salvage company, and kept the money received from that salvaged material.**

In November 2004, OIG learned that GDOT investigators had conducted an investigation of this same allegation that the anonymous caller presented to the OIG. The investigators reported their findings to GDOT management. The OIG obtained a copy of the GDOT investigation and it is part of the investigative file.

In January 2006, the OIG interviewed the GDOT Deputy Commissioner for Operations, Mr. Steve Henry. Mr. Henry stated he had considered taking corrective action concerning the misuse of state funds but had been awaiting an OIG final Report of Investigation before he took any personnel action with the GDOT employees involved.

The OIG informed Deputy Commissioner Henry that there was no requirement for an agency to await a final OIG report before taking any action deemed appropriate. OIG informed Deputy Commissioner Henry that the OIG was not requesting GDOT delay any proposed action.

### III. Finding – Allegation 1

GDOT has not taken action in this matter. GDOT did not take action because there was the misunderstanding that an agency could not take action while an OIG investigation is ongoing. There is sufficient evidence in the GDOT investigation to make the determination that the proceeds of the sale of the salvaged aluminum siding were state funds, and the state funds were not deposited in a state account.

### IV. Narrative – Allegation 2

***Allegation: In August 2003, Mr. Gary D. Priester, District # 5 Engineer, Jesup, Georgia, Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), improperly authorized the use of GDOT employees, equipment, and materials to repair or replace driveways and to make other unauthorized road repairs on State Route 292 in Toombs County, Georgia.***

In November 2004, the OIG learned that GDOT investigators conducted an investigation of this same allegation that the anonymous caller presented to OIG. The investigators reported their findings to GDOT management. OIG obtained a copy of the GDOT investigation, and it is part of the investigative file.

The GDOT report of investigation concluded that the repair and replacement of the driveways on SR 292 were authorized by state law and required for safety reasons. The review by OIG determined that the decision of GDOT to make the repairs and replacement of these driveways based on safety concerns was reasonable and within its statutory authority.

As explained below, the OIG investigation addressed the circumstances that led to the unsafe conditions with certain driveways. OIG determined that the private property owner of the driveways violated the terms of the GDOT private driveway permits issued to him.

The OIG determined from the property records on file with the Toombs County Clerk of Courts that on October 20, 2000, Dykes & Dolan Land Surveying, located in Vidalia, Georgia, surveyed a parcel of land containing a total of 52.44 acres. The survey included proposed roads for a Mr. Edward Herndon, owner of the property and a resident of Lyons, Georgia.

A review of GDOT documents disclosed that on February 8, 2001, Edward Herndon of 298 Oxley Drive, Lyons, Georgia 30436, applied for and received a residential driveway permit, #R02-2001-002-229, from George A. Shenk, Permit Inspector for GDOT in the Glennville, Georgia, area office. Mr. Herndon signed the permit request that reads, in part, "This drive to serve a single family dwelling only and may not be converted to any other use without approval of DOT."

The OIG interviewed Mr. George A. Shenk. In regard to the permit in question, Mr. Shenk stated that in 2001 he served as GDOT's Permit Inspector for the

Glennville, Georgia, area office. Mr. Shenk recalled Mr. Herndon requested a residential driveway permit for his property. Mr. Shenk remembers he explained to Mr. Herndon the different types of permits and requirements for each. Mr. Shenk told OIG that he specifically remembers informing Mr. Herndon that if the property housed four or more residences, a commercial permit is required.

In the Toombs County Clerk of Courts records, the OIG found another survey of this property by Dykes & Dolan Land Surveying filed on April 1, 2002. This April 1, 2002, survey shows Mr. G. Edward Herndon, as the property owner who requested the survey. This 2002 survey shows that Mr. Herndon requested that the surveyor divide his land into a subdivision of 17 lots.

The court records obtained by OIG which were not part of the GDOT investigation, demonstrate that the property owner, Mr. Herndon, did not follow the requirement to obtain GDOT approval before he converted the single-family driveway to a multi-family or subdivision driveway.

The OIG interviewed Mr. G. Edward (Ed) Herndon. Mr. Herndon stated that he has been a land developer for 25 years and the sole developer of the Eastwood subdivision abutting SR 292. Mr. Herndon confirmed that he purchased the land to develop parcel "A" as "Eastwood" subdivision.

Mr. Herndon acknowledged that on February 8, 2001, he applied for a residential driveway permit for the Eastwood Drive entrance to the Eastwood subdivision.

Mr. Herndon also stated in general terms that he has always obtained a private residential permit when developing a subdivision, not a commercial permit. He added that most subdivisions he has developed are not off state roads, but off county roads. He said that when he purchased the property, the road marked Eastwood Drive already existed and drainage pipes were in place on the state right-of-way, where SR 292 intersects Eastwood Drive.

Mr. Herndon acknowledged receiving a letter dated April 16, 2003, from Mr. James A. "Alan" Troha, the GDOT District Traffic Engineer. Mr. Herndon admitted that he did not comply with the requests submitted in the letter.

Mr. Herndon acknowledged that about six weeks later, he received a letter dated June 2, 2003, from Ms. Michelle Wright, GDOT Area Engineer. The letter advised him that no more residential driveway permits would be issued after the last request. This letter noted the number of driveways already in existence and the problems relevant to SR 292 drives.

The OIG asked Mr. Herndon if he was aware of the concerns of Eastwood subdivision residents. He acknowledged that he was aware of a petition, but denied that he had received a copy of the petition or having ever seen a copy of the petition filed with the GDOT about the safety issues and requesting road improvements.

Mr. Herndon said he spoke to someone known to him as Alan Troha, approximately “two to three weeks before the road improvements were made.” He described Mr. Troha as being “very professional.” Mr. Herndon said Mr. Troha wanted more information on the existing road condition.

Mr. Herndon asserted that he does not recall informing Mr. Troha or any other DOT official that the driveway in question was now county property because he had quitclaimed it to Toombs County in August of 2003. To the contrary, GDOT written records indicate that Mr. Herndon told Michelle Wright that he was not responsible any longer for the driveway. Mr. Herndon indicated that he had quitclaimed the road to the county and the county had accepted the grant of property.

Mr. Herndon confirmed signing a Quitclaim Deed to Toombs County on August 12, 2003. Additionally, he recalls that one of his attorneys presented this deed to the Toombs County Board of Commissioners on August 12, 2003. Mr. Herndon maintains that he thought the commissioners accepted the deed to his property into their inventory. In fact, the Board of Commissioners reviewed and rejected his request on the evening of August 12, 2003. Parenthetically, the GDOT repair work on the driveways commenced on the same date, August 12, 2003.

Mr. Herndon stated he does not know Mr. Gary Priester, District #5 Engineer, and denies using undue influence to cause anyone at the GDOT to commit state resources toward any land endeavor in which he has an interest or investment. He said that he has no knowledge of GDOT employees exceeding their authority in making improvements to Eastwood Drive.

By telephone, OIG interviewed Mr. James A. “Alan” Troha. During the interview, Mr. Troha confirmed that he supervised the work on SR 292 in Toombs County during August 2003. Mr. Troha stated that he ordered the work because the area in question presented a “safety hazard” to the driving public. Mr. Troha denied knowing that both driveways were private.

Mr. Troha advised OIG that he received considerable complaints from residents in the subdivision about driving safety concerns. As the result of the complaints, he went to Mr. Gary Priester and presented his safety concerns to him. Mr. Troha maintains that Mr. Priester gave him the authority to have the driveways and roads improved.

Mr. Troha could not explain why the GDOT did not approach the property owner (Mr. Herndon) and require him to pay for the improvements for the work performed at Eastwood Drive and SR 292.

OIG interviewed Ms. Michelle O. Wright, Area Engineer for the GDOT office in Glennville, Georgia. Ms. Wright recalled that her office actively participated in doing repairs to two private residential driveways on SR 292 in Toombs County, Georgia.



She stated the first repair was Eastwood Drive, which is a road that leads into the Eastwood subdivision. The second repair was a private residential driveway for two mobile homes on a tract of land adjacent to the Eastwood subdivision.

Ms. Wright confirmed that regarding the road known as Eastwood Drive, Mr. George Shenk, formerly the Permit Inspector, GDOT Glennville office, issued a permit for a private residential driveway on February 8, 2001, to Mr. Ed Herndon. Subsequently, Ms. Wright said it became apparent to her, and other GDOT staff, that Mr. Herndon requested a permit for a private residential driveway for a tract of land that he was developing into a subdivision.

According to Ms. Wright, Mr. Herndon should have applied for a commercial drive permit. GDOT records confirm that Mr. Herndon never applied for a commercial permit. She explained that to obtain this type of permit the property owner must obtain a performance bond.

Ms. Wright reported to OIG that as the number of improved lots in the subdivision increased, so did the traffic at the intersection of Eastwood Drive and SR 292. She stated the residents of the Eastwood subdivision complained of safety concerns entering and exiting SR 292. Later, the residents submitted a petition to address the safety issues related to this subdivision entrance. The residents sent the petition to Ms. Wright's office.

Subsequently, and in accordance with policies and procedures, she forwarded this petition to Traffic Operations in District # 5 located in Jesup, Georgia. At this time, Ms. Wright was uncertain whether GDOT should make or pay for driveway repairs. She accepted GDOT District Engineer Gary Priester's decision to approve, as a safety measure, the use of GDOT materials and staff to make repairs to the driveways.

OIG interviewed Mr. Ritchie Swindell, Assistant Area Engineer for the Glennville area office. He recalled that Permit Inspector George Shenk issued a residential driveway permit to the property of Mr. Ed Herndon located on SR 292, in Toombs County which was for two trailers.

Mr. Swindell stated that Alan Troha, District Traffic Engineer in Jesup, told him to go to the area on SR 292 and remove the driveway believed to be on Mr. Herndon's property. Mr. Swindell complied with Mr. Troha's request.

Mr. Swindell recalled that approximately two weeks later, Mr. Troha directed him to 'relocate' the same residential driveway to another area on SR 292. Mr. Swindell maintains that he told Mr. Troha and all GDOT employees concerned that they should not comply with this request, as it is the owner's responsibility and not that of the state. Mr. Swindell added that he did not recall the GDOT having done this type of work for anyone else previous to this time.

The OIG interviewed District # 5 Engineer, Mr. Gary D. Priester. Prior to the taped interview, Mr. Priester stated to the interviewers that he planned to retire

from state service in GDOT effective December 1, 2005. Parenthetically, Mr. Priester did retire on December 1, 2005.

During the OIG interview, Mr. Priester stated that he read the GDOT internal report concerning the SR 292 driveways and noticed that Mr. Alan Troha took responsibility for ordering the work on SR 292. Mr. Priester stated that he concurred with Mr. Troha's acceptance of responsibility with regard to this work. Mr. Priester said that he told the GDOT investigator that he recalled GDOT issuing a residential permit to Mr. Herndon.

Mr. Priester recalled the driveway and the permit issues, but said it had been "a while back." When asked about Eastwood subdivision lot sales, his comment was, "...so the individual (Mr. Herndon) sold lots. People built houses (but) didn't finish the permit in the driveway."

He remembered that the driveways in question presented a "very unsafe situation." He declared that GDOT does not make repairs on private property, only on the "right of-way." Mr. Priester denied the GDOT installed driveways at the SR 292 location. Mr. Priester stated that, "We went and did repairs on the driveways that I heard of...well, if we make the decision that for safety of the traveling public we're going to relocate a driveway that someone put in, no one would pay for that...the State pays for it." Mr. Priester stated that he was confident they (his crews) had performed similar type safety measures and that the GDOT (State of Georgia) paid the bill. When asked for examples, Mr. Priester could not specifically recall another instance.

Mr. Priester admitted that he made no effort to contact or confront Mr. Herndon regarding Mr. Herndon's financial responsibilities for providing access to SR 292. In addition, Mr. Priester did not request that any other responsible GDOT staff member attempt to contact Mr. Herndon in order to issue him a bill for services rendered by GDOT. Mr. Priester's explanation was that they would have "spent two or three thousand dollars to get—to run Mr. Herndon down."

Mr. Priester recalled that in 2003 he received a call from a state senator or representative about the safety hazards on SR 292 in Toombs County. He could not remember with certainty who called. After that call, he may have called Mr. Alan Troha, to tell him to go and look at the "safety issues."

## **V. Findings – Allegation 2**

A GDOT report of investigation concluded that the repair and replacement of the driveways on SR 292 were authorized by state law and required for safety reasons. The review by the OIG determined that the decision of the GDOT to make the repairs and replacement of these driveways based on safety concerns was reasonable and within its statutory authority.

OIG determined that the private property owner of the driveways violated the terms of the GDOT private driveway permits issued to him.

## VI. Narrative – Allegation 3

***Allegation: Mr. Gary D. Priester directed GDOT employees to clean and prepare the Long County, Georgia, GDOT facility for a cookout on October 20 and 21, 2004, which was a political event. Mr. Priester allegedly required certain GDOT employees to be cooks at the cookout.***

Concerning this allegation, during his interview Mr. Priester provided the following information. Mr. Priester acknowledged that on October 21, 2004, a cookout took place on the GDOT Ludowoci Long County facility. While Long County Sheriff Cecil Nobles managed the event and a number of elected officials running for reelection in November were present, Mr. Priester did not view it as a political event.

During the interview, the OIG showed Mr. Priester two “Georgia Department of Transportation Highway Maintenance Management System Daily Work Reports (DWR)” dated October 20, 2004, and October 21, 2004. The DWR provides the employee names, hours worked, equipment used, and costs incurred. In addition, the DWR provides a section for comments related to work activities. Mr. Priester identified the DWRs and confirmed the reports accurately depicted work done by GDOT employees at the Ludowici cookout on these days.

The DWR dated Wednesday, October 20, 2004, lists five GDOT employees who worked 35 hours in the section labeled “CLEANING UP HEADQUARTERS, CLEAN UP YARD.” This work cost the state (GDOT) approximately five hundred thirty-nine dollars (\$539.00). The DWR dated Thursday, October 21, 2004, in the section labeled “SETTING UP AND COOKING FOR COOKOUT” lists seven GDOT employees who worked 56 hours.” The total labor cost to the state (GDOT) for the cookout was one thousand twenty-two dollars (\$1,022.00).

The DWRs also show that the Long County, Ludowici, Georgia, facility where the GDOT held the cookout was not the permanent place of duty of several of the listed GDOT employees.

Mr. Priester explained to OIG that Sheriff Cecil Nobles of Long County organized this cookout. Mr. Priester stated:

“...for 30 years about the whole time Cecil (Nobles) has been sheriff in Long County, each fall there would be a cookout at our maintenance headquarters—cookout being generally sponsored by the sheriff...and it coincides with the court days in Long County when judicial structure was having court in October. It also coincides with the time in the fall when the flounder and fish are readily available. We’ve had those cookouts as I say for 30 years or so. And it was what I would characterize as a public service cookout. They were generally organized—have been organized for many,

many, many years. And after I became district engineer, we continued to have them. . . .”

Mr. Priester could not recall whether Sheriff Nobles attended the cookout. Mr. Priester could not recall the names of persons that attended the cookout, but explained he held it as a “public service.” Mr. Priester explained how he would set up the cookout.

“I would get a call and say we’re going to have the cookout. He said the telephone call, “typically it might be Cecil Nobles and again I don’t know if Cecil did or did not call. He (Cecil) was going to have the cookout. We want to have the cookout and it (inaudible) October coincided with these things (inaudible). Now whether invitations are sent to others, I do not know. I would be surprised if they were because—and then the sheriff in Liberty might call his folks. The state patrol post (inaudible) Reidsville, Long County—excuse me, Liberty County, the judges.”

Mr. Priester confirmed that GDOT employees worked at the cookout as part of their official state duties. When asked about his authority to use state employees, Mr. Priester responded:

“By the authority that one part of that work is cleaning up headquarters...and the headquarters needed to be cleaned up periodically anyway. So you can coincide you clean it up at the strategic time... so part of it.

The other part of it is that it’s very important that government agencies, private agencies, (inaudible) show appreciation to the community, to the employees. You know... we (inaudible) DOT’s had many, many times when Governor’s coming down and we’re going to cook for the Governor. We’ve done that many, many, many times on DOT time. That’s something we’ve done. Now if that’s not the proper thing, (inaudible) we’ll just stop doing it. We’ll have no interactions with the state patrol, sheriffs, the police that we’ve got to work with or the court system. Anyway...I approved it.”

Mr. Priester did not recall if anyone made a speech at the cookout. He said, “That’s absurd to think the cookout was a fund raiser.” He maintained that he “wouldn’t allow any participation in that sort of activity. Absolutely not.”

Mr. Priester admitted that he did not notify the GDOT Commissioner or any upper management official in Atlanta of the cookout. He explained his reason for not inviting the Commissioner; “Well, typically he (inaudible) wouldn’t come to a

cookout like that. But when we've had them for the Commissioner at other places, you know the same scenario, he would be there."

The OIG interviewed Mr. Ronnie O'Neal, a retired GDOT employee living in Lyons, Georgia. Mr. O'Neal claimed that he had no specific recollection of working at the cookout during October of 2004. He did recall attending cookouts at the Long County facility during previous years. In his view, the cookouts were designed for the enjoyment of the higher ranking supervisors. Specific work crews would be invited in order that the higher ranking supervisors could "go over stuff" with them.

The OIG interviewed Mr. Hugh McCullough, a practicing attorney in Glennville, Georgia. Mr. McCullough recalled that in October 2004 he entered the political process to become his district's representative to the Georgia General Assembly. In that pursuit, he said that on October 21, 2004, during the day (business hours), he attended a cookout on the grounds of the GDOT's office in Ludowici, Long County, Georgia. Mr. McCullough recalled that there were approximately 200 to 300 hundred people present at the cookout. Mr. McCullough stated there were no political speeches, per se; however, each person running for office took the opportunity to say a few words and informed everyone of the office they were seeking. These individuals, according to Mr. McCullough, continued to meet and greet each other while eating.

Mr. McCullough specifically remembered the presence of Long County Sheriff Cecil Nobles, Judge David L. Cavender, Judge Harvey, Mr. Barry Wilkes, the Liberty County Clerk and Court Administrator, and GDOT District # 5 Engineer Gary Priester.

The OIG interviewed Mr. Chad Hartley, District # 5 Maintenance Engineer. Mr. Hartley stated that on October 10, 2004, Gary Priester summoned him to his office. Mr. Priester told Mr. Hartley to call Area Engineer Michelle Wright and Assistant Area Engineer Ritchie Swindell of the Glennville area office to instruct them to send a crew to the Long County Maintenance Facility to set up and assist in a cookout. Mr. Hartley remembered Mr. Priester telling him that the Glennville crew was known to have two good cooks. Mr. Priester specifically told him not to tell Mr. Swindell and Ms. Wright that the request came from him (Priester).

Mr. Hartley told OIG that he called Mr. Swindell and Ms. Wright. He relayed the order for the work crews and informed Mr. Swindell and Ms. Wright that the order came directly from Mr. Priester.

Michelle O. Wright, GDOT Area Engineer for the Glennville office, explained that she and Mr. Swindell called Mr. Hartley to ascertain whether or not the cookout was mandatory for GDOT employees. According to Ms. Wright, Mr. Hartley told her that to his knowledge it was not a GDOT function and they were not required to attend.

Ms. Wright stated that she later heard the cookout was a political rally. She claims that she did not believe the cookout was for GDOT employees. Furthermore, she explained that as the Glennville Area Engineer she did not receive any notice of the event and did not see any advertisements, e-mails, fliers, or word-of-mouth about the cookout.

## **VII. Findings – Allegation 3**

Mr. Priester's decision to hold a cookout to show appreciation to local dignitaries, on state property, using state employees, two weeks before a county election, without the approval of the Commissioner of Transportation, was inappropriate.

A number of managers subordinate to Mr. Priester did not communicate their concerns of the inappropriateness of the cookout to senior GDOT officials in Atlanta.

## **VIII. Recommendations**

### **Allegation #1**

The GDOT determine whether the evidence in its internal investigation is sufficient to identify the individual(s) responsible for the failure to deposit the proceeds of the sale of salvage into a state account and take any disciplinary or administrative action deemed appropriate.

### **Allegation #2**

The GDOT coordinate with the Attorney General's office to seek reimbursement from the private property owner for the costs of the driveway repairs and replacement performed at state expense along SR 292. GDOT records reflect the cost incurred to the Georgia taxpayers to be approximately eight thousand eighty-eight dollars (\$8,088).

### **Allegation #3**

The Commissioner of the GDOT provide a written directive to District Engineers to set forth department policy for employee appreciation and public relations events.

OIG requests the GDOT, within 30 days of the issuance of this report, provide a written response whether and how these recommendations will be implemented.